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New York

President:	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu	(China)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mrs. Cordova Soria
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Adom
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
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	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (S/2018/1006)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (S/2018/1006)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel; Mr. Pierre Buyoya, African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel; and Mr. Pedro Serrano, Deputy Secretary-General for Common Security and Defence Policy and Crisis Response at the European External Action Service.

Mr. Buyoya and Mr. Serrano are joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Bamako and Brussels, respectively.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/1006, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel.

Before I give the floor to the briefers, I wish to remind them of the time limits.

I now give the floor to Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix.

Mr. Lacroix (*spoke in French*): I am grateful for the opportunity to address the Council today, together with His Excellency President Buyoya, Permanent Secretary Sidikou and Deputy Secretary-General Serrano, with whom we enjoy a strong and fruitful partnership. It is a pleasure for me to update the Council on the operationalization of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and the international support provided to it, including by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). I shall also identify the challenges encountered to date and list the measures that we believe are necessary for the success of the Force, in accordance with resolution 2391 (2017).

The security situation in the Sahel remains extremely concerning and the recent trends detailed in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/1006) are worrying. The increase in terrorist attacks against civilians, Government officials and security and defence forces, particularly in north-eastern Burkina Faso and the Niger, shows that the terrorist threat in the Sahel is spreading. As always, civilians are paying the highest price. Schools are closed, basic social services are no longer delivered, potential investments are being abandoned due to the climate of terror and fear that is taking hold there. This situation robs young people who are without prospects for a better future and real opportunities of hope, thereby creating a fertile ground for terrorism to thrive. If we do not take forceful and coordinated measures forthwith to prevent terrorism, that scourge will spread even faster and further, and it will become even more difficult to address.

In this hostile environment, the operationalization of the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel has not been easy. Over the past six months, it has faced serious obstacles, but has also overcome significant challenges. The attack on its headquarters in Sévaré on 29 June was a striking reminder of how well informed, prepared and determined terrorist groups operating in the Sahel region are. The attack destroyed critical infrastructure and communications equipment, resulting in the temporary suspension of Joint Force operations. However, G-5 Sahel member States and Joint Force leaders have persevered in the face of what could have been a fatal blow to this important initiative.

I take this opportunity to thank the outgoing Commander of the Joint Force, Brigadier General Dacko, for his service and to congratulate the new Force Commander, Brigadier General Hanena, on his appointment. I commend his leadership and the swift actions he has taken to ensure that efforts to operationalize the Joint Force are actively pursued. The decision taken by the G-5 Sahel Defence and Security Committee on 25 October in Niamey to relocate the Joint Force headquarters to Bamako should help to restore the momentum of the Joint Force.

It is now essential that the Joint Force resume its operations without delay. I therefore urge the leaders of the Joint Force to spare no effort to finalize the planning efforts and launch its next operations as soon as possible. That will send a strong signal to terrorist groups seeking to undermine State authority and destabilize the region, and will strengthen the

confidence of the G-5's international partners. We also call on the G-5 Sahel to step up its efforts to coordinate the forces sent under G-5 framework and to further clarify the concept of operations of the Joint Force. The cross-border operations of the Joint Force, as part of the first phase of the concept of operations, are important and should be continued. But in the long term, only an operation with a regional mandate and more clearly defined roles and responsibilities among the Joint Force, national armies and international forces will be effective in combating terrorism and transnational organized crime in the Sahel. We therefore encourage G-5 Sahel member States to agree on a common vision of the final status of the Joint Force.

(*spoke in English*)

Now more than ever, the G-5 Sahel Joint Force depends on the support of the international community. Remarkable progress has been in made in the area of force generation. The G-5 Sahel member States have deployed more than 80 per cent of their troops, manned all sector headquarters and completed the transfer of authority for all command posts. That is no small feat just over 12 months after the Joint Force reached initial operational capacity. However, much remains to be done. The Joint Force has still not attained full operational capacity. Major equipment shortfalls, capability gaps, insufficient infrastructure and a lack of secured operational bases continue to delay its full operationalization.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the European Union, which has done an outstanding job in matching the Joint Force's needs with corresponding donor pledges and has also been an important donor to the Joint Force since its inception. Contributions by all the donors, which came swiftly forward, were instrumental in the start-up phase of the Joint Force. However, to date almost 50 per cent of pledges made have not been earmarked, let alone disbursed. We therefore urge donors to deliver on their commitments and to provide the financial support the Joint Force so urgently requires.

MINUSMA continues to face a funding gap of almost $30 million to provide the support it was mandated to provide to the Joint Force pursuant to resolution 2391 (2017). While the Mission responded immediately and favourably to all of the Joint Force's requests for life-support consumables and transportation, it has lacked the funding to provide engineering support for the enhancement and fortification of the Joint Force's camp, which remains the biggest obstacle to its operationalization. Indeed, the Mission has undertaken all required assessments, presented scopes of work for four camps on Malian territory, and stands ready to begin engineering support as soon as the required resources become available. However, in the absence of funding there is not much the Mission can do.

That points to the shortcomings of the current support model for the Joint Force, despite the best intentions of all actors involved. The Secretary-General has stated repeatedly that the Joint Force requires a different support mechanism, namely, a dedicated support office funded through assessed contributions. That would allow for more predictable and sustainable planning of support measures to permit the extension of support to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force beyond Malian territory and enable MINUSMA to focus exclusively on mandate implementation. I also echo the calls of the Secretary-General and the Heads of States of the G-5 Sahel a mandate under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations for the Joint Force.

We are encouraged by progress made by the Joint Force in the operationalization of the police component and the establishment of its compliance framework. Investigations into the two incidents in Boulékéssi, and the transparency and cooperation demonstrated by both Malian authorities and the Joint Force's leadership are commendable. Respect for human rights is integral to achieving the operational aims of the Joint Force and a prerequisite for the overall success of that initiative. In fact, it will stand a chance only if the people of the Sahel are confident in the actions of their defence and security forces. We therefore call on the Force leadership to take advantage of the technical support provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and to consolidate the achievements that have already been made on important dimensions of its compliance framework.

Finally, any security initiative in the Sahel can be successful only if it is part of a larger, more holistic strategy for the region that addresses the underlying causes of instability while seeking political solutions to prioritize inclusive socioeconomic development. The United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, in conjunction with the G-5 Sahel's priority investment plan, provide the framework in which the Joint Force must be embedded. We welcome the signature of a partnership agreement between the G-5 Sahel secretariat

and the Sahel Alliance in Niamey on 30 October, which was an important step to enhance coordination and cooperation in the Sahel.

Furthermore, we echo the Secretary-General's calls on the G-5 Sahel member States to urgently create the Joint Force's support group to provide a forum for member States, donors and partners of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. The African Union has a key role to play in that regard. Under its chairmanship, the support group could ensure linkages with other regional and political initiatives. We call on G-5 Sahel countries to continue to address the critical governance shortfalls in the region that provide a fertile breeding ground for terrorism. The Malian peace process remains critical in that regard as a cornerstone of political efforts to address long-standing grievances.

It is our shared and collective responsibility to ensure that the Joint Force succeeds. As such, I call on each and every one of us to do our part. The United Nations remains deeply committed to this important initiative.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Lacroix for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Sidikou.

Mr. Sidikou (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the States members of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), I thank the Security Council for convening this briefing dedicated to the Joint Force of our regional organization. I also offer my profound thanks to Secretary-General Guterres for his biannual report (S/2018/1006) to the Security Council.

Six months ago, I provided the members of Security Council with an overview of the situation in the Sahel (see S/PV.8266). Since then, we have seen an increased level of insecurity in certain G-5 Sahel countries that is cause for alarm. On 29 June, a terrorist attack destroyed the G-5 Sahel Joint Force's headquarters in Sévaré, Mali. That event marked a halt to the operationalizing of the Joint Force, which enjoys the logistical support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

The Joint Force is clearly facing new challenges, including a lack of equipment, shortcomings at the logistical level and a lack of financing. Nevertheless, progress has been seen in the establishment of the compliance framework through the implementation of mechanisms aimed at ensuring respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. That work is being carried out with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and MINUSMA and is focused primarily on the police component of the Joint Force and on monitoring operations and investigations to identify those responsible whenever an incident occurs.

A regional conference on impunity, access to justice and human rights in the context of emerging threats to peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel was held in Niamey on 10 September, which further demonstrated the critical importance accorded to respect for human rights in the comprehensive approach put in place to respond to the crisis in the Sahel.

Concerning the financing of the Joint Force, I must speak frankly about the gravity of the situation. On 23 February, the international high-level conference on the Sahel held in Brussels concluded with pledges. To date, we are far from the €414 million that were pledged. We have received the equivalent of €17.9 million in equipment, services and valuable technical assistance from partners, such as the African Union and the European Union. However, the G-5 Sahel trust fund received pledged money only from and Rwanda and the West African Economic and Monetary Union. I am pleased and grateful to announce that yesterday the United Arab Emirates disbursed €10 million to our trust fund. On behalf of the people of the Sahel, in particular the G-5 Sahel, I thank that country.

At the initiative of the President of the Niger, His Excellency Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou, no effort has been spared to ensure the efficient management of the funds that have been received. The G-5 Sahel Council of Ministers has adopted the statutes guiding the support committee for the trust fund. Based in Nouakchott, that structure will facilitate the disbursement of the trust fund's resources and will be operational in the coming weeks.

With regard to the command of the Joint Force, a new duo — Brigadier General Hanena Ould Sidi of Mauritania and General Oumar Bikimo of Chad, appointed by the Heads of State — has taken office. They are at the helm of an arrangement consisting of the Headquarters, now in Bamako, and three forward command posts located in the west, the centre and the east. Upon assuming office, the new leadership began work on improving stewardship of the Joint Force and preparing for new operations. The Force has already

conducted six operations. However, our brave troops, who stand ready to sacrifice themselves, will not be able to achieve results without the timely provision of the necessary means.

As you have emphasized the important role of multilateralism in conflict resolution, Mr. President, the Sahel is experiencing a multidimensional crisis that illustrates the relevance of such an approach. Environmental and socioeconomic challenges make up the backdrop to which many factors undermining our stability have been added. Some G-5 Sahel countries are facing high levels of tension leading, inter alia, to the closure of schools, health-care facilities, police stations and courts. A large segment of young people, who make up the majority of the population, finds itself totally helpless, and unfortunately sees only two obvious options for the foreseeable future — either to flee through illegal immigration, with all the horrors it entails, or to embrace the hollow causes championed by terrorist groups that are only too happy to profit from the surrounding misery, while promising remuneration gleaned from the many forms of trafficking in which they engage. Given such a situation, it must be acknowledged that its development will lead to a further deterioration on the ground if we do not begin to take the appropriate measures and provide the necessary resources. That should be a cause of great concern that we might meet again in this Chamber in a few months' time to discuss a response to a security and humanitarian crisis of a much greater and tragic scale.

How can we initiate multilateral action to effectively support regional efforts? The G-5 Sahel has seen many disparate interventions in the areas of migration, security, humanitarian assistance and development. Given the magnitude of crises, let us go beyond calls and other warnings. Let us ensure that the funding of multilateral institutions is commensurate with our security and development needs. Let us skilfully use our resources to avoid a vicious circle the harmful consequences of which will represent an even greater future challenge.

You have called for a return to the fundamental principles of the United Nations, Mr. President. Accordingly, courageous decisions must be made to support some Member States. As the Chairman of the G-5 Sahel stressed a few days ago at the Paris Peace Forum,

> "We are unable to rally international solidarity to achieve sustainable multilateral support for the Joint Force, which was established to fight terrorism and organized crime".

In keeping with Secretary-General António Guterres's call, I therefore add my voice to those of many Heads of State and representatives of our peoples to request that the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel be mandated under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. Such a decision would consolidate the legitimacy of our efforts and give meaning to the shared responsibility in the fight against the hydra-headed terrorist threat. My presence here attests to the importance of the Sahel in preserving the geopolitical balance of the world. Let us therefore formalize the international community's attention.

As you so rightly pointed out recently, Mr President, while the world finds itself confronted with multiple new and extreme crises, causing regions that have long been stable to totter, on the African continent, including in the great Sahel region, a nexus of five devoted countries has courageously united in the face of adversity to prevent the ship from sinking. Those five countries are struggling to hold on despite everything and to work within their limited means to meet all those immense security and development challenges. Those countries require a greater level of tangible solidarity on the part of the international community in confronting challenges, the successful outcome or failure of which — no one in this Chamber should be in doubt — will have significant repercussions far beyond the borders of Africa. There is still time to take all the necessary measures and to finally act accordingly.

Lastly, I should like to highlight the recent work of the G-5 Sahel in the area of development — the only solution that can ensure long-term stability in the region. We are currently organizing the first G-5 Sahel donor and partner coordination conference to be held on Thursday, 6 December, in Nouakchott. A portfolio of 40 structure-related projects constitutes the first phase of the priority investment plan planned for the period 2019-2021. We welcome the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, the implementation of which we discussed with key stakeholders of the United Nations system at a retreat held in Dakar last week. Our discussions with the Sahel Alliance are under way, and we signed a memorandum of understanding on 30 October in Niamey to implement an emergency development programme, in particular concerning water issues. All of that, however, is inadequate for

meeting the €1.9 billion needed for development, especially given that the sum of €414 million euros for security enhancement has failed to materialize.

I therefore solemnly call for increased investment in the Sahel. All forms of financing to promote prosperity are an investment in preventing insecurity. For that reason, less than a month before the crucial conference that is take place, I left Nouakchott to be speak before the Security Council. Let us act quickly and effectively in the conviction that doing so is in our common interest.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Sidikou, for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Buyoya.

Mr. Buyoya (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by warmly congratulating China on its accession to the presidency of the Security Council for the month of November, and I particularly welcome the Council's topical choice of agenda items, which demonstrate its indisputable interest in Africa.

On behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, I thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his detailed and comprehensive report (S/2018/1006), which paints a clear picture of the efforts that have been undertaken in the operationalization of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) Joint Force and proposes possible solutions to the challenges that have been identified.

I should also like to pay tribute to the G-5 Sahel and its member States for their sacrifices and steadfast commitment to achieving the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force in all its components. That reflects the political will of member States as they strive to surmount the multifaceted crises plaguing the region. I especially commend the Permanent Secretary, Mr. Maman Sidikou, who has skilfully and decisively put his heart and soul into ensuring that the G-5 Sahel becomes an institution that matters, and I reiterate my deepest gratitude to the bilateral partners and subregional, regional and international organizations that are working together for the operationalization of the Joint Force by providing training in various areas, strengthening capacity-building, restructuring the Permanent Secretariat and delivering logistical support. We are convinced that such support is vital if the G-5 Sahel Joint Force is to achieve the goals that have been assigned to it.

I also laud the opening of the Sahel Defence College and the Sahel Security College, which are institutions that will enable member States to harness high-quality human capacities over the short, medium and long terms. I take this opportunity to reiterate my deepest sympathies to the victims of the heinous attack targeting the Sévaré headquarters of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force that took place on 29 June, as well as to their families.

The security situation in the Sahel continues to deteriorate. There are increasing asymmetrical attacks against defence and security forces and civilians in the area of operations of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. It is imperative that the Force be operationalized as soon as possible and integrated into a comprehensive approach that encompasses security, development, improved governance — specifically vis-à-vis the presence of State institutions throughout the territory — and respect for human rights.

I now turn to the African Union's contribution. The Commission is pursuing its efforts to support the G-5 Sahel on the political, technical and material levels, to the extent that it is able to do so. The African Union Peace and Security Council, at its 679th meeting, on 13 April 2017, adopted a concept of operations for the Force and authorized its deployment for an initial, renewable period of 12 months. The Peace and Security Council reiterated its support for the Joint Force at its of 759th meeting, on 23 March this year. The African Union supports the idea embodied in the report that the concept of operations should continue to be tailored to reflect the realities on the ground.

I also welcome the Secretary-General's emphasis in his report on the overriding need to establish a support group for the G-5 Sahel Force. The African Union remains convinced of the importance of strengthening ties between the African Union and the G-5 Sahel Force and making them an integral component of the African peace and security architecture. In the light of the growing deterioration of security conditions, the African Union reiterates its support for the call issued by the Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel, at their meeting held on the margins of the African Union Summit in Nouakchott, to endow the Force with a mandate under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations and to enable it to enjoy direct United Nations financing. We find ourselves at a critical juncture and the Force deserves the support of the international community.

To conclude, I commend the members of the G-5 Sahel for the sacrifices that they have made in their struggle against terrorism. I thank all partners for their support, call for greater commitment, and reiterate the full support of the African Union at all levels — political, technical and material.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Buyoya for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Serrano.

Mr. Serrano (*spoke in French*): Allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for the invitation to brief the Council on the European Union's action in support of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel).

The stability of the Sahel region is key not only for the countries that comprise it but also for the neighbouring regions and certainly for Europe's security. The European Union therefore remains committed, alongside other international partners, in particular the United Nations and the African Union, as well as bilateral partners, whose contribution is essential.

However, if certain actors deserve special mention today, it is the Sahel countries themselves, and in particular those of the G-5. Those countries, based on a common understanding not only of threats and challenges, but also opportunities, have taken their destiny into their own hands through a regional cooperation initiative. Since the creation of the G-5 Sahel in 2014, the European Union (EU) has actively supported its growth, including by helping to mobilize the international community, as it did, for example, at the international high-level conference on the Sahel, held in Brussels in February. This is in fact a priority of the foreign policy of the European Union and its member States.

I should like to cite some examples of the concrete support that the European Union is providing to our partners in the Sahel in the framework of an integrated approach in the political, development and security areas.

In regard to our political and diplomatic engagement, the partnership between the European Union and the G-5 Sahel is an almost daily reality, with frequent visits among European and Sahelian leaders, including at the summit in Brussels that I mentioned and regular ministerial meetings, the latest of which was held in June. The partnership is also reflected on the EU side in the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the key role played by the European Union Special Representative for the Sahel, Mr. Angel Losada.

In that context, support for the Malian peace process through the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali is crucial to the stability of Mali and the entire region. The European Union, which remains the largest donor in Mali, is actively involved in the international mediation in support of the process. Moreover, through the provision of targeted expertise, the European Union supports the efforts of the Malian authorities to consolidate their governance in central Mali.

With regard to development and humanitarian action, the aid given by the European Union and its member States to the region amounts to €8 billion for the period 2014-2020, including €3.9 billion from the European Development Fund and the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa and €1.7 billion in budget support. That support is consistent with the G-5 Sahel priority investment plan. We look forward to the next donors' conference to be held in Nouakchott on 6 December. Moreover, in 2017, the European Union allocated €240 million in humanitarian assistance to the Sahel.

Lastly, allow me to talk about European cooperation in terms of security and defence in the Sahel. The security situation in the region is deteriorating, particularly in central Mali and in northern and eastern Burkina Faso. That was described by the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Lacroix, and I refer to his briefing. In that context, the initiative of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force is therefore being developed and increased international support in the areas of security and defence is becoming essential. The European Union has been present in the region since 2012 with three missions and nearly 800 European experts on the ground.

The European Union capacity-building mission (EUCAP) Sahel Niger and EUCAP Sahel Mali are civilian missions aimed at supporting the internal security forces in Mali and in Niger to strengthen their capacities to fight against terrorism and organized crime. They also work to contribute to security sector reform through advice, training and the provision of equipment. Since their roll-out in 2012 and 2014, respectively, EUCAP Sahel Niger and EUCAP Sahel

Mali have provided training to nearly 16,000 members of the security forces in Niger and Mali.

In coordination with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other partners, those two civilian missions closely support the Sahelian authorities in developing the police component of the Joint Force, a key element in ensuring the judicial follow-up of military actions and in strengthening the link between the Force and the local populations.

The European Union military mission to contribute to the training of the Malian Armed Forces (EUTM Mali), with 570 soldiers, is a military training mission that provides advice to the Malian authorities on restructuring the armed forces by training battalions. Eight battalions were trained between 2013 and 2017. EUTM Mali is also a key partner of the Joint Force. To date, it has organized four training courses for military staff officers of the five Sahel countries and a leadership seminar for the Force headquarters and the three sectors. In addition, EUTM provides advice to the Commander of the Joint Force and his command post on developing organizational and operational procedures and on infrastructure and equipment requests.

Together with our Sahelian partners, the European Union has now embarked on a process of adapting those missions to provide advice, training — through assistance to the G-5 Defence College and the Sahel Security College, among others — and support to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, as well as bilaterally to each of its members in terms of their cross-border cooperation.

To that end, first, with the agreement of the G-5 Sahel members, the area of operations of the missions will be extended to all the G-5 Sahel countries and the mandates of the missions adapted to the needs jointly identified. In addition, a regional coordination unit for those missions will be deployed to Nouakchott to better support the governance structures of the G-5 Sahel, as we have agreed with its Permanent Secretary, whom I warmly welcome.

Secondly, the EU strongly supports the development and the operational implementation of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force with a total amount of €100 million. The support is structured as follows: equipment, services and infrastructure — €75 million; support to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) for operational and logistical support to the Joint Force in Mali — €10 million; support to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to establish a compliance framework on respect for human rights and international humanitarian law for the Joint Force operations — €10 million; and support for G-5 Sahel governance, in particular the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel trust fund — €5 million.

Although sometimes slower than desired, the delivery of EU-funded equipment, such as protection teams, armoured vehicles or anti-explosive devices, to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force units is under way. The equipment and services that have already been delivered to the field or are available to the Joint Force amount to the sum of €17.9 million. Procurement processes to the tune of €70 million are under way. Discussions continue with the Commander of the Force for the use of the €11.5 million still available

In that context, I also warmly welcome President Kaboré's announcement during his visit to Brussels last week that the G-5 Sahel would be ready to bear the recurrent costs of the Force, namely, €115 million a year.

Thirdly, the European Union has established the coordination hub, which is made available to the G-5 Sahel and international donors to facilitate the identification of needs and to coordinate the financial support of donors to the Joint Force. Moreover, I would like to thank the Security Council for the support expressed through resolution 2391 (2017) to the coordination hub, a platform that makes it possible to share and update the list of needs and lists of offers. In the context of regionalization, we aim to work even more closely with the G-5 Sahel trust fund and support committee.

I would also like to reaffirm that the cooperation between the United Nations and the European Union in Mali is excellent, particularly between our civilian and military missions and MINUSMA on the ground. The EU fully supports the work of MINUSMA and of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and condemns all attacks against the Mission.

The European Union is determined to continue to build on its partnership with the G-5 Sahel countries, which is vital to the security and development of the region. We welcome the support of the Security Council for such efforts.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Serrano for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank President Buyoya, Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Deputy-Secretary-General Pedro Serrano for their very enlightening briefings. I particularly welcome the presence around this table of Permanent Secretary Maman Sidikou, whose constant engagement we appreciate.

The fragility of the security situation in the Sahel and the recent extension of the terrorist threat to eastern Burkina Faso must alarm us all. The G-5 Sahel States have shouldered their responsibilities by establishing the Joint Force and by developing of common priority investment programme, which demonstrate their commitment to security and development on the ground. In that context, it is the responsibility of the international community to support the States concerned in their efforts to respond to a threat to international peace and security that concerns us all.

The establishment of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, at the initiative of the States concerned, represents a historic initiative without any true precedent or equivalent. Given the magnitude of the task and the related challenges, we must duly assess and take stock of the significant progress made in barely more than a year.

Of course, since it is precisely a key tool in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel, everyone would have liked the process to have moved forward more quickly and for the G-5 Joint Force already to be fully operational. We all are aware of the considerable progress that remains to be made.

However, the achievements demonstrate that the process is well under way. It must be pursued with unity and determination.

I am thinking first of the fact that the Joint Force is now an operational reality, with 4,000 men deployed, functional command structures and several operations across the sectors. I am also thinking of the establishment of a human rights compliance framework unparalleled on the continent and the progress made in setting up a police component, which makes it a noble model of an African operation. The steps taken by the Malian Government following the abuses committed in Boulékéssi last May are part of that positive dynamic. Lastly, I think of the fact that the Joint Force is intended as an essential link in the security architecture deployed in the Sahel alongside the national armies, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, Operation Barkhane and the European missions. The enemies of peace understood that when targeting its headquarters in Sévaré during the tragic attack last June.

For all those reasons, it is absolutely crucial that the G-5 Sahel States continue their mobilization in order to ensure that the Joint Force becomes fully operational as soon as possible. That is the priority. And the biggest priority of all is that new operations be conducted in the next few weeks. The decision of the Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel to relocate the headquarters of the Joint Force to Bamako must also be implemented as soon as possible.

Given this unprecedented mobilization by the G-5 Sahel States, it is now the responsibility of the international community and the Council to provide them with effective support that corresponds to the level of their challenges. That includes, first and foremost, ensuring that the pledged financial contributions materialize without delay. Many have already disbursed their pledged funds or are drawing up contracts to do so, thanks to the central role played by the European Union in that regard. It is essential that countries that have not yet made their contributions do so as soon as possible. It is also critical that additional resources be provided to finance the technical support that will enable the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali to provide logistical and operational support on the ground, which is not the job of bilateral contributions.

The difficulties of generating and extracting international support, however, demonstrate that the mechanisms in place are not fully effective or capable of generating predictable, sustainable resources, which is crucial to scaling up the Joint Force in the short and medium term. We therefore fully support the Secretary-General's recommendations for enhancing multilateral support for the Joint Force by providing a robust mandate and implementing a logistics package. We are ready to bring them to the Security Council as soon as the Joint Force is fully operational and we see the first results on the ground on the basis of the support that has already been provided. We will do it in the spirit of the quest for consensus that has always

driven our efforts on this issue, but also because it is crucial that we provide the Joint Force with all of the support it needs.

France firmly believes that this exceptional security commitment to stabilizing the Sahel should be accompanied by an equivalent level of mobilization on the political and development fronts. First, on the political front the priority is the eagerly awaited full implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. The Council has put in place a robust framework in support of the Malian stakeholders. The international community must make use all of these mechanisms from now until the March deadline established in resolution 2423 (2018). We are also counting on the G-5 Sahel States to participate in the work of persuading all the Malian parties to come on board.

On the development front, the priority is creating sustainable prospects for the people of the Sahel, especially its young people. With 500 projects identified and totalling more than €7.5 billion by 2020, the Alliance for the Sahel is aiming to mobilize donors and promote good practices to ensure that the assistance reaches the most vulnerable populations quickly, particularly in cross-border areas. The United Nations Development Programme in particular has a key role to play in terms of governance. The signing of a partnership agreement between the Alliance and the G-5 Sahel is also an important step that should make it possible to implement rapid-impact projects by the end of the year in vulnerable areas identified by the G-5 Sahel, in order to prevent them from plunging into instability. We also fully support the G-5 Sahel priority investment plan and call on donors to be ready for the donor coordination conference to be held in Nouakchott on 6 December. All of those projects should be based on the broader framework established by the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which is intended to serve as a guidepost for avoiding any diffusion or duplication of effort. Lastly, we encourage the Peacebuilding Commission to maintain its strong commitment to the Sahel issue. It represents an important setting conducive to encouraging balance and coordination between the political, security and development efforts.

The situation in the Sahel today demands our full attention and effort. All the parties must do their part — the G-5 Sahel, by conducting the Joint Force's new operations in the next few weeks; donors, by ensuring that they make their financial contributions without delay; and the Council, by committing to revisiting its multilateral support for the Joint Force once it is fully operational. France will issue a press statement to that effect at the end of this meeting.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his informative briefing. The African vision for resolving the issues in the region, as outlined by Mr. Maman Sidikou, the Permanent Secretary of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, and Mr. Pierre Buyoya, High Representative of the African Union for Mali and the Sahel, deserves the most serious attention we can give it. We are also grateful to the rest of today's briefers.

We agree with the alarming opinions on the situation in the Sahel that have been expressed today. The level of the threats to security and stability in that part of Africa is unprecedentedly high. The terrorist underground that has established itself in the region is scaling up its operations and seeking to expand its geographical territory. The number of new radical groups is growing, as is organized crime, which is actively exploiting the absence of any authority across vast areas of the region. The roots of these problems are well known. In the Sahel we are reaping the whirlwind sown by the collapse of statehood in Libya, the legacy of a crude foreign intervention. Practically speaking, we believe it will be impossible to stabilize the situation in the region without normalizing the situation in that country.

We welcome the initiative of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) to create a Joint Force to combat terrorism and organized crime. In the 18 months of the Joint Force's existence, undeniable progress has been made. Several military operations have been carried out, the staffing of military personnel is at 80 per cent, the establishment of a headquarters and secretariat is nearing completion and mechanisms have been created for financing them. We expect that concrete plans for the continuation of joint operations will be announced in the near future. In our opinion the Joint Force has already demonstrated that it represents a key factor in ensuring the stability of the region. Of course, much remains to be done. The 29 June terrorist attack on the headquarters of the Joint Force in Sévaré was naturally a heavy blow that has slowed the training process. At the same time, it served to reveal the Joint Force's weak spots. As we understand it, the relevant conclusions

have been drawn and work has begun to address the errors. It will also be important to speed up the process of building military camps for the Joint Force, solve the problems of providing them with enough weapons and improve the training of combat personnel.

Those issues cannot be resolved without ensuring stable and predictable funding for the Sahel States' joint military structures. We have seen that the funds are slowly reaching the region. Unfortunately, many of those who made financial pledges in this regard have not been in a hurry to fulfil them. And owing to a lack of funding, neither can the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali fully implement its mandate to support the Joint Force.

We are convinced of the importance of further coordinated efforts, on the part of both the Africans and the international community, aimed at combating extremism in the Sahel-Sahara region. Military methods alone clearly cannot root out that evil. It is also essential to effectively counter the spread of extremist ideology, work constructively to tackle the acute socioeconomic problems plaguing the countries of the region and strengthen their State institutions, and we want to highlight the key role of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel in addressing those challenges.

Russia is studying the possibility of adjusting its effective cooperation with the G-5 Sahel States in order to deal with the region's pressing problems. We are already giving military and technical assistance to a number of the countries in the region and providing training for military and police personnel. We will continue to facilitate capacity-building for the armed forces of the G-5 Sahel with the aim of enabling their Joint Force to become an effective tool for the restoration and maintenance of peace in West Africa.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): We commend the presidency of China for this opportunity to discuss the activities of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). We would like to express our appreciation to Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the G-5 Sahel, Mr. Pierre Buyoya, African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, and Mr. Pedro Serrano, Deputy Secretary-General for Common Security and Defence Policy and Crisis Response at the European External Action Service, for their comprehensive briefings.

Kazakhstan remains concerned about the deterioration of the security situation in the Sahel's tri-border area and the further expansion of terrorist and extremist groups into central Mali and eastern Burkina Faso. It is worrying that this insecurity is further aggravated by the alliances that terrorist and extremist groups have formed with groups involved in transnational organized crime, drug and human trafficking and arms proliferation. Our delegation welcomes the commitments and determination of the G-5 Sahel countries to operationalize the Joint Force, which is critical to effective counter-terrorism in the region. We believe that making the G-5 Sahel Joint Force fully operational will positively reinforce the joint efforts of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the Malian national security forces and other mechanisms to bring peace and stability to the Sahel.

However, to succeed, the G-5 Sahel countries need predictable and long-term sustainable funding from the donor community, as well as technical assistance from Member States. We therefore support the recommendations contained in the semi-annual report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/1006) regarding the need to revise support measures and the funding mechanism. In turn, the G5-Sahel States will have to speed up the process of making the Joint Force fully functional, improve its operational readiness and sustainably implement the human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework. We welcome the opening of the security and defence colleges established by the G-5 Sahel, which is an important step towards enhancing the Joint Force's capacity.

Another important task is ensuring the complementarity and strengthening the coordination between the G-5 Sahel Joint Force with all security forces in the region, including MINUSMA, Operation Barkhane and regional frameworks, in particular the African Union-led Nouakchott process. The Joint Force should find its place within the larger political and institutional framework and strategy that is planned for the subregion, and which also calls for improving coherence among the Sahel countries themselves. We therefore support the call from the G-5 Sahel summit held in Nouakchott in July for harmonizing the G-5

Sahel priority investment plan and the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel.

To genuinely address instability in the region, counter-terrorism measures must be accompanied by development efforts and by tackling the root causes of conflict and instability. To some extent, those issues can be resolved or at least reduced by strengthening local governance, reducing poverty and tribal rivalries, providing basic services and creating more jobs. Mitigating the effects of climate change should be another priority. My country has proposed a three-pronged strategy for resolving regional conflicts, consisting in strengthening the security-development nexus, adopting a regional approach and streamlining the United Nations system to enable it to deliver as one.

A comprehensive overall strategy of this kind could prove to be a highly effective and sustainable tool for addressing the common threats facing the Sahel and the countries of the region. The recalibrated United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the recently launched Support Plan represent a good basis for such a comprehensive and integrated approach. We are also looking forward to the alignment of the Integrated Strategy with the African Union's strategy for the Sahel. We hope that concrete results will be achieved in that regard at the upcoming African Union ministerial meeting on Mali and the Sahel. In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Kazakhstan's commitment to helping the Sahel countries to fulfil their vision for peace, progress and prosperity.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): Let me also thank today's briefers.

The challenges facing the Sahel region are complex and becoming increasingly so. The United Kingdom is concerned about the increasing incidence of terrorism, criminality and intercommunity violence in central Mali. We share the Secretary-General's concerns about the spread of insecurity and terrorism to other parts of the region, including eastern Burkina Faso. Many speakers today have talked about the importance not only of security — although that is key — but also about development, and the wider economic development and provision of services that are required. We can see our 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in action in this region. There is not one single element that can ensure success alone. All of them are needed. There are economic and social issues that go back decades and that underpin the instability in the Sahel. Our development work must address those long-standing causes of the instability we see while also emphasizing individual rights.

The Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) needs to tackle terrorism and create the space for Governments and international organizations to safely deliver services. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), of course, is a crucial component of assisting Governments in that space. In Mali in particular, we need to focus on the peace process and recommit to it. All those components are therefore not only individually but collectively vital, and it is the core task of all in leadership roles, whether in New York, Nouakchott or on the ground, to ensure that those efforts are connected, sequenced and effective. And it would help the Council if we could hear more about those joint activities in practice as well as in theory.

As the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/1006) sets out, there is clear progress to applaud. We recognize the leaders and the personnel of the G-5 Sahel States for continuing their efforts to unite and work together despite difficult and adverse circumstances. The United Kingdom is particularly encouraged by the successful deployments of troops and the conduct of six Joint Force operations on the boundary zones; the full operationalization of the three sector headquarters and the launch of the Sahel security and defence colleges. We recognize the bravery and dedication of the G-5 Joint Force in what Mr. Lacroix described as an alarming security situation.

We were also pleased to see the update on the human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework. The United Kingdom emphasizes the importance of ensuring that the operations of the Joint Force are conducted in full compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We welcome the steps already taken to advance the compliance framework and encourage continued efforts to embed and make it operational throughout the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. The protection of civilians and the operationalization of the framework are vital to maintaining the support and consent of the populations that the Joint Force was created to protect.

Moving forward, we want to encourage the G-5 Sahel secretariat to finalize the Joint Force's strategic concept of operations, which will both demonstrate

unity of purpose within the Joint Force and boost donor confidence. We call on the G-5 Sahel countries to expedite their efforts to deploy all their outstanding troops and fully establish the police component in order to address the growing transborder threat that the region is facing. I welcomed Mr.Sidikou's bluntness this morning. We also strongly urge all partners to make good on the financial commitments they have made to the Joint Force as soon as possible in order to ensure that it becomes even more of a reality as quickly as it can. The United Kingdom reiterates its support for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. To that end we have contributed 15.5 per cent of the package of support of the European Union (EU) to the Joint Force as well as pledging £2 million in bilateral support, and we have deployed three Chinook helicopters to the Sahel to support Operation Barkhane. That is on top of the approximately $200 million that we have provided to the Sahel in development and humanitarian assistance between 2018 and 2019.

The United Kingdom recognizes the contribution of the regional actors working for stability in the Sahel, including MINUSMA, Operation Barkhane and the EU missions, and we support the technical assistance and training they are providing. Enhance coordination is key to ensuring that the various stabilization efforts have maximum impact and avoid duplication. We commend the EU's role in managing the coordination hub so far, and recognize its intention to transfer the hub to the G-5 Sahel once it has the capacity to receive and host it. To that end, we strongly urge the G-5 Sahel to accelerate the establishment of the support group that will serve as a platform for exchanges and coordination with national, regional and international partners.

I made it clear earlier that military action alone is not the solution to this issue, and I outlined some of what the United Kingdom has done to that end. With that in mind, we welcome the recalibration of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the launch of the United Nations Support Plan, which provides an important framework for addressing the structural impediments to development, peace and security in the region in a more integrated manner, and the issues in the Sahel more generally, which, as I said before, go back decades. We also welcome the continuing role taken by the Peacebuilding Commission in mobilizing commitments and partnerships between the United Nations system, the countries of the Sahel and other international and regional partners with a view to advancing implementation of the Integrated Strategy.

Mr. Adom (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes this briefing on the progress of the operationalization of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). I thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel, Mr. Pierre Buyoya, African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, and Mr. Pedro Serrano, Deputy Secretary-General for Common Security and Defence Policy and Crisis Response at the European External Action Service, for their excellent presentations.

The briefings informed us about the progress that has been made and the challenges to be tackled in order to ensure the full operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. The challenges are related in particular to a lack of adequate, predictable resources, sufficient personnel, and appropriate training and equipment adequate to the scale of the security threats. Despite those difficulties, the Council's unity of action and the continued commitment of State and institutional actors have enabled the concerted and generally satisfactory implementation of the recommendations of resolution 2391 (2017), on the logistical and operational support to the Joint Force provided by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). In that regard, Côte d'Ivoire would like to encourage all the relevant stakeholders, particularly the G-5 Sahel States, to continue their efforts to bring the Joint Force up to speed.

According to the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/1006), while the progress in building up the G-5 Sahel Joint Force is encouraging, it is still below expectations. Côte d'Ivoire therefore urges the G-5 Sahel States to continue their dialogue with international partners with a view to strengthening and improving the coordination of the multifaceted support for the Joint Force's operationalization. We continue to believe that its rapid deployment capabilities and familiarity with the social and cultural environment constitute the Joint Force's comparative advantages in the fight against the spread of terrorism and cross-border crime in the Sahel.

The complexity of the current security challenges in the Sahel and the West African subregion demand that States pool their resources to fight terrorist groups.

My country therefore welcomes MINUSMA's logistical and operational support to the Joint Force, as mandated by resolution 2391 (2017), which is a good example of cooperation between United Nations and African peace operations.

We emphasize how pleased we were with the signing on 23 February of the technical agreement between the United Nations, the European Union and the G-5 Sahel countries. We therefore urge all partners to follow up on their financing pledges in order to complete the process of operationalizing the Joint Force. We welcome the adoption by the G-5 Sahel States of the compliance framework aimed at ensuring scrupulous respect for human rights by the Joint Force. Its implementation will require raising awareness of respect for fundamental human rights among the military components of the Joint Force, as well as effective punishment for those who commit violations of human rights.

Even if the Joint Force reaches its full operational capacity, it is undeniable that its effectiveness will continue to depend on current efforts to stabilize the political environment in the region. The Joint Force must therefore be one piece of a political effort that goes beyond security policy to form part of a comprehensive process for the lasting settlement of the current crises in the Sahel region. In that regard, and in the context of the quest for a political solution to the Malian crisis, my delegation calls on all the signatories to the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali to implement it immediately. The fact is that ensuring the Agreement's success would be a first step towards restoring lasting peace and stability in the Sahel. In addition, the Joint Force's security responses must also be supported by strategies aimed at eradicating the factors behind regional vulnerabilities and improving the resilience of States and local populations to crises. We believe that to that end we must ensure that the ongoing security and development policies are aligned so as to provide sustainable responses to the multidimensional crises facing the Sahel. In that regard, we appreciate the recalibration of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the development of the United Nations Support Plan in the wake of the review of the security and development challenges in the region.

Côte d'Ivoire appreciates the financial support of bilateral and multilateral partners to the Joint Force, but we remain concerned about its long-term financial viability, given the scale of its needs and the delays in making the promised funds available. We believe that considering the regional dimension and scale of the current threats, it is the international community's responsibility to come up with rapid responses to the need for predictable and sustainable funding.

The consequences of insecurity and instability, exacerbated by the actions of numerous jihadist groups and cross-border criminal networks, extend well beyond the Sahel region. Today they constitute an important challenge to the maintenance of international peace and security, demanding that we act urgently to formulate coordinated and sustainable responses in order to bring stability and development to the people of the Sahel.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my country's full appreciation to the States members of the G-5 Sahel for the enormous sacrifices that they have undertaken despite difficult regional circumstances. Their steadfast commitment in a context where Africa aspires to take ownership of its collective security is an example that we should support. Côte d'Ivoire will continue to stand by their side as part of the collective efforts undertaken by the international community.

Mr. Amde (Ethiopia): We wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, Permanent Secretary Maman Sidikou of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel Pierre Buyoya, and the Deputy Secretary-General for Common Security and Defence Policy and Crisis response at the European External Action Service, Pedro Serrano, for their respective briefings and updates concerning the situation in the Sahel region and the activities of the G-5 Sahel.

We fully recognize that the restoration and expansion of State authority in northern Mali and G-5 Sahel countries still remains a serious challenge. In the absence of viable State structures, the promotion of peace and reconciliation across the region and carrying out critical institutional reforms, including security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in Mali, have been very difficult.

The threats and frequent attacks in recent months against security forces and other personnel serving in State institutions, as well as the destruction of public facilities, must be taken very seriously. We agree with the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/1006) that the numerous recent terrorist attacks are clear indications of the growing presence of terrorist groups in the region, including those along the Libyan-Chadian border, which are taking advantage of the security vacuum not covered

by the operations of the international forces or the G-5 Sahel member States armed forces. This situation calls for stronger coordination and deterrence work by the G5-Sahel Joint Force and the national militaries and security agents of each State of the region.

The joint efforts of the G-5 Sahel member States and their commitment, which was renewed during the high-level week of the General Assembly through the pledge of Member States to fully operationalize the Joint Force, deserve appreciation. If countries of the region are assured of predictable financing and supplied with adequate equipment capabilities, we believe that there is no reason why this should not materialize.

At the aforementioned high-level event on Mali and the Sahel, representatives of donor countries expressed their willingness to support the Joint Force and urged the G-5 Sahel member States to accelerate force generation efforts. It is, however, important that the international community, including the Council, take concrete action, as requested by President Ibrahim Keita of Mali and other representatives from the region, to place the G-5 Sahel Joint Force under a Chapter VII mandate so as to ensure continuous support and funding. The geographic challenge of military operations in the Sahel desert and the vastness of the terrain make it imperative that the capacity of the Joint Force be strengthened through robust international support.

We support the African Union's work in reporting on the activities of the Joint Force, focusing on progress in its operationalization, international support to the Joint Force, the implementation of the technical agreement, challenges encountered, and adherence by the G-5 Sahel to human rights and international humanitarian law. In this context, we very much support efforts of the G-5 Sahel in restructuring its secretariat to meet its operational demands.

While the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force and presence of other international forces are contributing to resolving the security problem in the Sahel, partnerships in the social and economic development aspects, and principally in the implementation of the priority investment plan, should be a major preoccupation in order to ensure sustainable development in the region. In that regard, the cooperation of the United Nations agencies — such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the European Union and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali — is indeed vital. We hope that the outcome of the annual discussion of the Peacebuilding Commission on 12 November will help mobilize support for the G-5 Sahel and the wider region.

Although the Governments of the region do not stint in exerting efforts, the humanitarian situation in the Sahel remains very precarious and may continue to be worsened by increasing conflict and climate-related challenges. We wish to extend our support to the emergency programme for the rehabilitation of local infrastructure in border areas of the countries of the Sahel region. In that connection, it is important that access to basic services and job opportunities in the border areas be scaled up in the context of implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I too thank all our briefers this morning

I want to start by commending the countries of the region for their very valuable efforts for peace and security in the Sahel. We understand how those efforts are carried out under very difficult circumstances, and I take the opportunity to express our condolences for the loss of lives among security forces and civilians. We share the grave concern about the deteriorating security situation in the region. We are especially worried about the situation in central Mali and the spill-over of violence to Burkina Faso and the Niger. The high number of civilian casualties and allegations of violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law are alarming. I think our briefers rightly underlined the effect that all this has on the people, not least the youth, of the region.

We therefore welcome the determination of the G-5 Sahel countries to make a united effort to meet the security challenges. We are encouraged by the steps taken so far in the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, as well as the extensive support provided by partners, including not least the European Union. We know from our experience in the Security Council how regional efforts and cooperation provide such a huge and important boost to any United Nations efforts for peace.

It is now crucial to swiftly implement the remaining elements of resolution 2391 (2017). Creating the conditions for outstanding troops to be deployed and the

police component of the Joint Force to be established without delay should be a priority. To ensure the full functioning and credibility of the Force, authority over battalions must be transferred to the Force Commander. A new timeline for reaching full operational capacity should be defined soon, as others have said this morning. The further development and clarification of the Joint Force's strategic concept of operations are equally important. Clarity on the desired end state would demonstrate unity of purpose and bolster donor confidence.

As stated in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/1006), respect for human rights and international humanitarian law will be a key determining factor for the success of the Joint Force. It is imperative that alleged human rights violations, including those related to the operations of the Joint Force, be prevented and investigated. Perpetrators must be held to account.

We appreciate initiatives aimed at increasing confidence between populations and the G-5 Sahel countries' security forces. We are encouraged by the continued work on the establishment of a robust human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework. The operational and logistical support provided by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to the Joint Force is important. At the same time, we continue to emphasize that this support should not affect MINUSMA's capacity to implement its own mandate and strategic priorities in Mali.

As we move forward, options for further United Nations support must be seriously considered. Predictable and reliable funding is vital if the Joint Force is to be able to carry out planning and operations in an effective and sustainable manner. To achieve that, it is imperative in turn that the Force live up to existing standards and expectations.

The full implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali remains key. Achieving long-term stability and sustaining peace in the region also require taking a holistic and inclusive approach. The Joint Force needs to be embedded within a larger political and institutional framework, as also emphasized by the Secretary-General. We welcome the establishment of the support group for the Joint Force, but note that further efforts to enhance strategic direction are needed. That must be carried out in close coordination with regional structures and organizations.

Durable peace and stability requires a combination of security and development measures. In that regard, we appreciate the joint efforts by regional actors, the African Union and the European Union with the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel. That Plan now provides a unique opportunity for more coherent and coordinated international support. The upcoming donor coordination conference in December, which will discuss the priority investment plan, will be important. We note Secretary Sidikou's very good point that pledges must be translated into real support.

Earlier this week the annual session of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) also focused on the Sahel and the joint PBC-Economic and Social Council meeting on climate change. There was strong support for the priorities identified in the United Nations Integrated Strategy, including focusing on economic growth, governance and climate change. The importance of youth and increasing women's participation was also highlighted. It is important that the PBC continue to engage in order to mobilize support, sustain international attention and coordinate efforts. The Peacebuilding Commission remains a unique platform for convening actors, bringing about a holistic understanding of security and development and politically accompanying countries and regions in transition.

The Deputy Secretary-General and Sweden's Minister for Foreign Affairs visited countries in the Sahel region last July. We then organized a high-level Council meeting on women and peace and security (see S/PV.8306). The conclusions from that visit and the meeting, as reflected in the presidential statement on the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/PRST/2018/16), emphasize the importance of enhancing the role of women in preventing and resolving conflict and building peace.

Sweden remains committed to supporting Mali and the Sahel in their efforts to enhance security and development and build sustainable peace. In addition to our substantial troop contribution to MINUSMA, our broad commitment includes support through the EU as well as bilateral and regional development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. Strong international support, a united Security Council and effective regional cooperation through the G-5 Sahel will be key for the Sahel region's forward progress towards peace and stability.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): I thank Mr. Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Mr. Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel); Mr. Buyoya, High Representative of the African Union for Mali and the Sahel; and Mr. Serrano, Deputy Secretary-General for Common Security and Defence Policy, for their briefings today.

There is no denying the many challenges faced today by the people and countries of the Sahel. We are concerned by the increase in intercommunal violence and insecurity along the borders of Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger and by the continued prevalence of terrorist and criminal activity throughout the region. As many have said here today, only through a combination of good governance focused on addressing the root causes of instability and creating opportunity, respect for human rights and security can the region resolve the challenges and defeat the threats that it faces.

The United States commends the initiative of the G-5 Sahel member States to create and operationalize its Joint Force to combat threats of terrorism and transnational organized crime. We take this opportunity to recognize the sacrifices of the soldiers of G-5 member States and their families and to also honour the civilians killed as a result of the violence and insecurity in the region.

The United States strongly supports the G-5 Sahel Joint Force and its efforts to establish lasting security. We believe that bilateral support remains the most effective option. We continue to work closely with all partners to coordinate our contributions of much-needed equipment, training and technical advice. Over the past year the United States has nearly doubled its assistance to G-5 Sahel member States, from $60 million to approximately $111 million, specifically to fill prioritized capability gaps of the Joint Force. That amount constitutes just one piece of broader and long-standing United States security assistance to the G-5 member States, with over $1 billion in total United States support to their institutions and combat capabilities since 2012.

We laud the continued support of the international community and the Joint Force's development and successful operationalization, in particular the support of the European Union (EU) for the implementation of the human rights compliance framework for the Joint Force and its continuing training missions. We commend the G-5's collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) towards the continued establishment of a compliance framework. The Joint Force's professionalism and respect for international human rights law and international humanitarian law will be critical to its long-term success. We also salute France's long-standing and integral role as a security partner to the Sahel countries through its Operation Barkhane and the many sacrifices made by that mission's men and women to defeat continuing violent extremist threats. We also applaud the role of the United Nations, including the personnel of MINUSMA, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and others, who are working diligently to solve political insecurity challenges across the region.

The United States hopes to see the effective implementation of the technical agreement among the G-5 Sahel, the United Nations and the EU called for in resolution 2391 (2017), which allows for MINUSMA to be reimbursed for logistical support provided to the Force within Mali's territory. As Ambassador Haley stated a year ago (see S/PV.8080), we believe that is the full extent of any support role that the United Nations should play outside of continued coordination and technical assistance on a voluntary basis. But the technical agreement remains a way for MINUSMA to help at a critical stage. We encourage donors to support the trust fund for MINUSMA reimbursement in order to facilitate urgent engineering needs like the Mission-proposed camp designs, which still await the G-5 Sahel's approval.

On a related but separate note, we also do not believe Chapter VII authorization is needed to accomplish the Joint Force's mission, as the G-5 Sahel countries already has existing agreements in place for military operations in their respective territories.

As others have recognized, security responses alone will not solve every problem. Therefore, the United States continues its multisector partnerships with the Governments and societies of the G-5 Sahel countries to bolster stability and security through United States humanitarian, health, agriculture, governance and development assistance. The United States provided more than $460 million during its 2017 fiscal year in development and humanitarian assistance to programmes in those countries. As we have stated

before, our support seeks to complement the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the creative partnership envisioned in its Support Plan.

At the centre of the region, with its own unique political and security challenges, is Mali and its peace agreement. We call again on the parties to that agreement and to those of the new Pact for Peace in Mali to make significant progress over the next few months in recognition of how critical their success on the road map will be. Going forward, we cannot and should not accept the lack of coordination and communication among the parties that we have seen in the past, including, for example, the disagreements that led to the failure of the opening ceremony for accelerated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration last week in Gao. Parties must expeditiously resolve outstanding issues and rapidly implement the key provisions outlined in resolution 2423 (2018). The stakes are too high, both for the people of Mali and of the region. The Security Council should reserve the right to use all its available tools, including sanctions, on spoilers who obstruct the agreement's implementation.

The United States will continue to work together with the G-5 Sahel and its partners to ensure our bilateral support is appropriate and effective. We also encourage all donors to disburse the resources pledged to the Joint Force last February in Brussels. Through our effective coordination with the security and development actors in the region, the leadership of the African Union and that of the Economic Community of West African States in solving regional and local disputes, significant improvements in security can be made. The sustainability of those improvements will depend on the progress of the G-5 member States towards effective governance, the creation of access to opportunity and respect for human rights, accountability and inclusiveness. Also critical will be an expansion of the roles of women, young people and marginalized groups in decision-making. Together, those steps can contribute to achieving durable peace and stability and unleash the potential of this vital region and its people.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to express our thanks for the convening of this meeting and for the important briefings by Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Mr. Maman Sidikou, Mr. Pierre Buyoya and Mr. Pedro Serrano.

Peru is following with concern the delicate humanitarian situation and the continuing deterioration of security in the Sahel subregion, despite the valuable action of the countries that make up the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). We regret the spread of violent extremism and condemn the persistence of terrorist attacks. We wish to emphasize the need to redouble our efforts in three areas that we consider fundamental to stabilize the subregion and build sustainable peace.

First, with regard to security, the Joint Force is called on to play an essential role in the fight against terrorism and transnational organized crime, which are mutually reinforcing phenomena. To do that it must have appropriate equipment and enhance its operational capacity through the full deployment of its military and police components. That, in turn, presupposes the availability of predictable and sustainable financing, as well as the technical cooperation of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). To that end, we stress the need for the G-5 Sahel countries to continue to implement the Joint Force's strategic concept of operations and the human rights compliance framework, with a view to bolstering the confidence and support of the international community.

Secondly, in the political sphere, we believe that the peaceful holding of elections in Mali and Mauritania should make it possible to strengthen institutions and governance in those countries, which, in turn, should be reflected through more legitimate and effective action for the stability and progress of the subregion. In that connection, we hope that the recent signing of the Pact for Peace in Mali, in line with the provisions of resolution 2423 (2018), will enable the revitalization and accelerated implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation.

Thirdly, on the issue of sustainable development, as several speakers have pointed out this morning, achieving sustainable peace in the Sahel goes beyond military considerations. We need a multidimensional approach that addresses the root causes of the conflict. That means, among other measures, building and strengthening the necessary capacities and institutions to promote and protect human rights, countering the negative effects of climate change, providing basic services and fostering sustained economic growth in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We stress the importance of promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and of increasing employment opportunities, particularly

for young people. Women and young people are called upon to play a central role in building a better future for their societies.

Finally, the various efforts, initiatives and mechanisms deployed in the field to maintain political and operational coherence must reflect and address the needs and priorities of the member countries of the G-5 Sahel, as well as the provisions of the relevant Council resolutions. The G-5 Sahel is a clear example of the potential and commitment of African countries to promote peace and security on their continent. They deserve the strong support of the international community and, in particular, of the Council. In that connection, we stress that the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, together with its Support Plan, provide a comprehensive framework for working to strengthen governance, security and development in the region. Consequently, all initiatives should operate within that framework.

Peru will continue to support the efforts of the G-5 Sahel countries, MINUSMA, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the European Union and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, among other agencies of the United Nations system, as well as actors committed to achieving sustainable peace in the Sahel.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands) (*spoke in French*): First and foremost, allow me to thank the briefers for their excellent statements, which give a clear picture of the cooperation of the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union with the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). Given the current situation, such cooperation is critical.

Today I would like to address three points. First, I will highlight concerns about the changing security environment. Secondly, I will mention the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. Thirdly, I will focus on the link between security and development in the Sahel.

First, with regard to the security situation, the Kingdom of the Netherlands is concerned about reports of increased cooperation among terrorist networks in the Sahel. As a result, new regions are under threat, particularly the north and east of Burkina Faso — and even beyond the Sahel. In addition, the increase in intercommunal violence has complicated the situation. That is evident in central Mali, as the Council has been informed several times this year. The evolving threats calls for evolving responses. The emergence of violent local conflicts requires deeper knowledge of local dynamics, while the regional challenges require a regional approach and regional cooperation. Therefore, it is critical that the Council discuss today its support for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force.

That brings me to my second point — the operationalization of the Joint Force. The results obtained in recent months by the members of the G-5 Sahel are admirable, especially since they had to overcome serious problems, such as the attack on their headquarters in Sévaré. We commend the leadership of the Nigerian presidency in that regard. The time has come to intensify efforts towards the standing up of the Joint Force. In particular, we advocate the operationalization of its police component and its cooperation with national anti-criminal networks. We welcome recent progress in the implementation of the human rights compliance framework. The prevention of human rights violations requires constant attention and commitment, and the members of the G-5 Sahel must fully take on that responsibility. Bilateral and regional partners are considering increasing their support for the Joint Force. We reaffirm that it is not only resources that are needed. Force-absorption capacity and the coordination of support and requests are also factors to be considered. It therefore remains critical to strengthen the capacity of national armed forces.

On my third point, the link between security and development, this week we held a discussion with Mr. Sidikou, the Ambassadors of the G-5 countries and interested Council members on preventing violent extremism in the Sahel. I am pleased to see the Ambassadors of the G-5 countries here today. It became very clear during that meeting that all partners in the Sahel are pursuing the same objective, namely, regional peace and stability. The security efforts of the Joint Force, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and other actors, including European Union missions, will be insufficient. We must invest more in conflict prevention. To prevent violent extremism, we must attack the root causes of the conflict, including climate change, which leads to water scarcity and desertification and, as a result, food insecurity and competition between farmers and herders.

Persistent inequalities and discrimination against particular regions or communities are also sources of

conflict. In addition, we must keep in mind the enabling factors and triggers identified by the United Nations Development Programme in its report entitled *Journey to Extremism in Africa*, on the disproportionate use of State violence.

Therefore, the success of initiatives in the Sahel will depend on key elements, such as boosting the confidence of local populations and ensuring accountability, respect for human rights, close cooperation between the Joint Force and strong national judicial systems, and the complementarity of development and security efforts.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the importance of the role of the G-5 Joint Force in making the Sahel a more stable and secure region. That is precisely the model of regional ownership that is needed for the maintenance of international security and peace. The G-5 donors conference for development initiatives scheduled for 16 December will be an important milestone. In particular, investment is needed in fragile border areas.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands remains a committed partner of the countries of the Sahel in the areas of security, diplomacy and development. As our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Stef Blok, said during his recent visit to the Niger, we intend to increase our diplomatic presence and support for the region. As international partners, we must adopt a firm and modest attitude that respects the leadership and ownership of the G-5 Sahel countries.

Mr. Esono Mbengono (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I express my appreciation to your delegation, Sir, for the convening of this meeting, which allows us once again to emphasize the need to act against extremism and its impact in the Sahelo-Saharan region. We welcome and thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for Sahel (G-5 Sahel); Mr. Pierre Buyoya, African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel; and Mr. Pedro Serrano, Deputy-Secretary-General for Common Security and Defence Policy and Crisis Response at the European External Action Service.

We are at a crucial and critical juncture in our fight against terrorism, criminality and — I would add — mercenaries in the Sahel region. The increasing mobility and sophistication of terrorist armed groups operating in the region have become a real threat to international peace and security. The Republic of Equatorial Guinea is following very closely and is concerned about the increase in extremism in the Sahel. Recent asymmetrical and cross-border attacks on local defence and security forces, on the one hand, and against the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, its personnel and facilities, on the other, underscore the need to act swiftly to halt increasing levels of terrorism. To that end, the response of the international community must consist in the constant promotion and implementation of joint initiatives, as High Representative Buyoya underscored, by prioritizing multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approaches. In that regard, a joint military partnership for transborder cooperation is the appropriate means for responding to the multiple threats to the region's security.

In parallel with those joint efforts, it is necessary to ensure joint funding and support to achieve the full operational capability of the Joint Force. We firmly believe that the needs of the Joint Force would be largely met if pledges made to support it were fulfilled. Funding is needed to train soldiers, achieve standardization among the five States' armies, acquire optimal security facilities and equipment, build and fortify operational bases and to meet any other need to counter terrorists and prevent attacks. We also commend the commitment of contributors and donors and urgently call for hastening the establishment of a trust fund in accordance with the provisions of the extraordinary summit of Heads of State of the G-5 countries held on the margins of the thirty-first Summit of the African Union, held on 2 July in Nouakchott.

As the Permanent Secretary of the G-5 Sahel just announced, the five States have decided to finance the Joint Force beginning next year and provide it with an annual budget of $13 million, which we commend. However, we must be aware of the complex problems facing the Sahel countries and the possibility that that decision may affect other development priorities, such as in the health and education sectors, which largely justifies the need to combine synergies to achieve sustained financing.

The close collaboration of the G-5 Sahel with partners, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and INTERPOL, should be underlined. The joint assessment missions held from July to October by the Permanent Secretariat and UNODC will undoubtedly create a legal framework for the standing up of the police component so as to ensure

that the Joint Force can adequately fulfil its mission to combat terrorism and organized crime by ensuring transparent judicial follow-up. Moreover, we commend the strategic partnership with INTERPOL, which is critical to information-sharing and ensuring that relevant criminal information generated by Joint Force operations and investigations can be cross-checked and recorded in INTERPOL global databases.

As highlighted by the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel, we must not forget that political and security considerations are inextricably linked to humanitarian and development issues, if we are to succeed in consolidating and sustaining peace in the Sahel. Regional development initiatives — such as the signing, on 30 October in Niamey, of a partnership protocol between the Permanent Secretariat of the G-5 Sahel and the Alliance for the Sahel to establish a framework for cooperation and operational modalities for implementing joint projects in a rapid and flexible manner; the emergency plan for the Sahel of the Government of Burkina Faso, which foresees investments in infrastructure, energy and public services; the official launching of the disarmament, demobilization and socioeconomic reintegration process for former combatants in State structures in Mali; and electrification projects in Malian cities, such as in Ménaka — are all measures heading in the right direction.

Extremism in the Sahel is spreading. It is a fact. That spread, which threatens not only the West African region but also Central Africa, in which Equatorial Guinea is located, is the result of the current situation in Libya. We must not forget that. The main problem is not the emergence here and there of local armed groups that are remotely controlled by recent jihadist movements in North Africa, the Middle East, the Gulf countries, Afghanistan or elsewhere. The problem involves the extraordinary ease with which terrorist groups are able to penetrate new territories, while provoking conflicts among ethnocultural communities over access to resources. It should be noted that, as a result of that situation, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea was the victim in December 2017 of an attempt at its destabilization, which was orchestrated by mercenaries from countries of the subregion. That incident undoubtedly underscores the need for even the Central African States to join international efforts by providing specific and meaningful support to our brothers in the Sahel. At the bipartite summit held in Lomé on 30 July, the Heads of State and Government of the member States of the Economic Community of West African States and of the Economic Community of Central African States expressed their desire for intercommunity solidarity. It should therefore be implemented without further delay, by means of logistical and financial support, or through the use of the intelligence services of the various States, in the fight against terrorism and mercenaries in all its forms and manifestations.

Furthermore, we hope that the forthcoming G-5 Sahel donors and partners coordination conference will make it possible to adopt concrete mechanisms for financing the priority investment programme in order to translate into action the efforts of the relevant Member States to guarantee the security of the people and assets needed for sustainable development.

In conclusion, I recall the what the Senegalese President said in Paris on the sidelines of the celebration of the centenary of the 1918 armistice:

> "The Sahel issue requires a concerted effort equal in strength and scope to that in Syria to combat terrorism in the Sahelo-Saharan region."

Lastly, Equatorial Guinea supports the French delegation's proposed statement to the press on the proceedings of this meeting.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank Mr. Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Mr. Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel); Mr. Buyoya, African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel; and Mr. Serrano, Deputy Secretary-General for Common Security and Defence Policy and Crisis Response at the European External Action Service, for their valuable briefings.

I would like to address two main issues as part of our discussion today: first, security, and secondly, development.

First, concerning security, the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel and the proliferation of terrorist attacks throughout the region, including the attack on the G-5 Sahel Joint Force headquarters in June, are very worrisome and constitute serious challenges. The increase in the number of attacks against military forces in Mali and neighbouring countries has contributed to the deterioration of the security situation and insecurity

among civilians, which must be addressed as soon as possible. We look forward to the Malian Government's investigations into the killing of a number of civilians in May.

We call on the Joint Force to use the United Nations expertise in order to build up its human rights capacity. I would like to seize this opportunity to commend the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, United Nations agencies, the European Union and the African Union for their efforts in that regard.

Pertaining to the Joint Force, we value the commitment made by the five countries to advance and promote the work of the Joint Force, especially at the organizational, logistical and operational levels, to enable it to fight terrorist groups in the Sahel. We look forward to the full operationalization of the Force. The financial, security and logistical challenges facing the five countries impede them from carrying out their responsibilities. It is only through sustainable funding, as requested by the Force at the high-level meeting held on the margins of the General Assembly in September and as stressed by the Secretary-General in his latest report (S/2018/1006), that the Force will be able to confront the serious challenges as it should that threaten the security and stability in the region.

We cannot discuss the challenges in the Sahel without addressing the political situation in Mali. As the Council heard last month (see S/PV.8376), strides have been made to that end. We have seen positive signs of a renewed commitment by all the relevant parties in the country to implementing the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. The Malian Government has stepped up its efforts to extend its authority over areas under the control of terrorist groups, after those groups were able to expand their areas of operation to neighbouring countries. The Government has also sought to provide order and justice to citizens in those areas. The Joint Force has an important role in building trust with the communities that had been under the control of terrorist groups.

Secondly, regarding development, stability in the region requires sustainable development. Undoubtedly, the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel leads to that end. We welcome the decision by the Peacebuilding Commission during its annual session to focus on development in the Sahel. As stated by the Deputy Secretary-General during that session, the region has huge potential and natural resources. However, it suffers from a lack of financial and human resources. We believe that development has a pivotal role in the prevention of conflicts. Kuwait has therefore supported the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, and we have cooperated closely with all countries of the Sahel to support various development projects. Kuwait has also provided nearly $150 million over the past three years through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development.

We welcome the continuing cooperation among the countries of the region, the United Nations, the African Union and all international stakeholders in the region to strengthen capacities in the areas of governance, building police capacities and the participation of women and youth. Those have a direct effect on development and stability, which would contribute to building trust between the Joint Force and the people and creating the necessary environment to support the Force in fighting terrorism. My country commends the G-5 Sahel in efforts to that end through the Priority Investment Programme.

In conclusion, I reiterate our support for the Joint Force, which will be unable to achieve its goals without the support of the United Nations and the international community to curb the spread of threats across the region. The Force can also play an important role in ensuring the development of the Sahel. We stand ready to cooperate with all members of the Security Council to address the future steps to be taken by the Joint Force. In that regard, we support the press statement proposed by the French delegation.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): At the outset, let me thank today's briefers for their very informative and valuable statements on the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) Joint Force and recent developments in the region.

Poland welcomes the commitment and determination of the G-5 Sahel countries to overcome the many challenges they face in operationalizing the Joint Force. Reports that the Joint Force's operations will resume in December are encouraging and will send an important message to adversaries that they are not giving up.

The cross-border character of threats in the Sahel region requires transnational responses. We commend the even greater role of the regional organizations in improving effective cooperation among Sahel countries. We welcome the adoption of the regional strategy and

pursued work on subregional strategies. However, much remains to be done and the obstacles that need to be overcome are diverse and complex. Therefore, we urge the G-5 Sahel countries to accelerate efforts to deploy all remaining troops and fully establish the police component.

It is also urgent that the operationalization of the Force goes along with the adequate implementation of the comprehensive prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies at the national level. Furthermore, members of the G-5 Sahel need to step up their efforts to finalize the Joint Force's strategic concept of operations.

We remain deeply concerned by the multifaceted challenges in the Sahel. The spread of insecurity and terrorism to other parts of the region, including into eastern Burkina Faso, is particularly worrying. Terrorism continues to have devastating effects on lives and livelihoods, depriving entire communities of access to basic social services, as well as long-term opportunities and perspectives.

Winning the hearts and minds of the populations is crucial in the struggle against terrorism. Addressing violent extremism and terrorism through security measures is essential, but must be supported by a broader political and institutional framework that can guide its operations, ensure alignment with regional strategies and help translate strategic decisions into operational and tactical measures.

In that context, the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel should promote the completeness and adequacy of regional and subregional initiatives. That opportunity must also be seized to create a platform for cooperation aimed at assuring wider respect for international law and standards, including human rights law and humanitarian law.

Weak governance and neglect by the State, unemployment, socioeconomic exclusion and inequality, worsened by climate change and a growing population ,remain at the core of instability in the region. It goes without saying that a military solution alone is not enough to create durable peace and stability. We must strengthen the nexus between security and development actions to ensure long-term stability in the Sahel region.

In that regard, a successful outcome for the Malian peace process remains the cornerstone of stabilization efforts in the region. Moreover, scaling up access to basic services and job opportunities in Mali, as well as other countries in the region, is necessary to reduce the dependence on humanitarian assistance, as outlined in the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the United Nations Support Plan.

Finally, let me express our full support for the Special Representative for West Africa and the Special Adviser for the Sahel for their efforts aimed at spearheading the implementation of United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and its Support Plan to ensure continuity of United Nations support to the Sahel region.

Mrs. Cordova Soria (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), Mr. Buyoya, African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, and Mr. Serrano, Deputy Secretary-General for Common Security and Defence Policy and Crisis Response at the European External Action Service, for their briefings.

The Security Council meets again to consider the situation in the Sahel region, which continues to be very volatile, as shown by the attacks against the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, the international forces and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. That has a profound impact on the local populations and civilians.

Likewise, challenges in the areas of security, governance and development have increased. The complex security environment persists, including asymmetric threats from armed and terrorist groups, as well as transnational crime, trafficking in drugs and arms and human smuggling and trafficking, among other things. The aforementioned elements not only jeopardize the stability of the countries of the region but also represent a threat to the political peace processes.

All the elements that I have mentioned, added to the lack of adequate sustainable and predictable funding for the Joint Force, have delayed its full and effective operationalization, in addition to it still lacking, among other things, communications equipment, air assets and, above all, training for its members.

In that regard, we commend the significant amount of financial contributions to the Force. However, we underline the urgent need for the support to continue

materializing through the rapid and prompt disbursement of all pledges announced by donors that have not yet been honoured. We emphasize that it is crucial to accelerate the full and effective operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force.

At the same time, Bolivia has repeatedly reiterated the urgent need to analyse but, above all, identify the structural causes of conflicts. In the specific case of the Sahel, such causes have had a profound impact on the current context of the region. The bloody consequences of interventionism and regime-change policies triggered, in the aftermath of the 2011 conflict in Libya, the collateral destabilization of the Sahel, bringing chaos with disastrous results that continue until today.

Regrettably, in addition to the precarious security situation, the Sahel presents other great challenges. The threat of a large-scale humanitarian crisis and the risk of food insecurity affecting nearly 5 million people, including refugees and displaced persons, not to mention the adverse effects of climate change, further exacerbate the crisis in the region.

Despite the bleak outlook in the Sahel, we would like to emphasize the significant efforts of the regional and subregional organizations, led by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. We welcome and commend the efforts and the considerable political will of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger in terms of cooperation and operationalization of their forces on the ground. The G-5 Sahel Joint Force is a great and exemplary demonstration of the coordinated efforts of the African Union and the United Nations.

An example of the great work and effort of the G-5 Sahel is evident in the six joint operations carried out in the border areas, including through the increased deployment of troops. We encourage the States members of the G-5 Sahel to take the necessary measures to consolidate the new operations through the prompt adoption of a timeline for operations and the full deployment of troops.

In addition, we believe the full and complete implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel is vital in terms of a comprehensive framework to strengthen governance, security and development in the Sahel region. We also welcome the launch of the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel, fine-tuned on the margins of the African Union summit held in Nouakchott in June of this year.

Last but not least, it should be highlighted that almost a year after the adoption of resolution 2391 (2017), there remains much to be done. The refusal of some members of the Council to define the G-5 Sahel Joint Force under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations has made its deployment and operationalization even more difficult. We believe it crucial that the Security Council take urgent and relevant steps in that regard in order to protect and safeguard the life and integrity of millions of people in the Sahel.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of China.

I would like to begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, Permanent Secretary Sidikou, High Representative Buyoya and Deputy Secretary-General Serrano for their briefings. I would like to make four points.

First, we must continue to support the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), which faces real difficulties, including the worsening regional security and inadequate operational capabilities, equipment and training, as well as funding shortages. As an important mechanism for the countries in the region to respond to the security challenges independently, the Joint Force represents a significant contribution to peace and security in Africa and the world in general. It requires the continuing support of the international community. We hope that the Joint Force will resume operations as soon as possible.

Secondly, we must promote a political settlement of the regional hotspot issues. The security situation is closely linked to the peace process. On the basis of respect for the sovereignty of the countries concerned, the international community should actively support the countries of the region in taking forward the peace process and promoting national reconciliation so as to continue to work towards the continued de-escalation of the relevant hotspot issues and to resolve them, thereby creating conditions conducive to lasting security and stability in the Sahel region. Support should be given to all the relevant parties in Mali in order to expedite the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and seriously address the spillover effect on the Sahel of issues outside the region,

such as the Libyan crisis, in order to minimize their negative impact.

Thirdly, we must adopt a comprehensive approach to tackle the root causes of conflict. The international community should support the Secretary-General in implementing the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel. It should also support the priority investment plan developed by the Sahel countries and, in the light of the real needs of the countries and populations in the region, help the Sahel to achieve sustainable development and to enjoy the dividends of peace.

Fourthly, we must ensure that we leverage the role of regional mechanisms. The international community should support African countries in resolving African problems through African solutions, encourage regional and subregional organizations in Africa, such as the G-5 Sahel, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, to play a leading role in dealing with the challenges in the Sahel and help the G-5 Sahel Permanent Secretariat to build capacity.

China is ready to work with the international community in continuing to play a constructive role in order to achieve peace, stability and development in the Sahel region and on the African continent.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.